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I have offered the Congress a budget that balances the budget without destroying education, without undermining our commitment to the environment and without violating our commitments to working families, the elderly, and poor children.

It seems to me that we have to ask these questions. We have to move beyond the level of rhetoric to the values that are embodied in the choices that are being made. And I want to see us make the right choices for America. We need to balance the budget, but we need to do it in a way that strengthens our families, strengthens opportunity, and honors our obligations. That's the only way to help this country, and I am determined to see that we work together to do that in the next few weeks.

Ross Perot

Q. Mr. President, what do you think about Ross Perot's decision to form a third party?

Congressman. Give us a break, will you? [Laughter]

Q. How about the President?

The President. I try to balance the budget, and I'm an ardent promoter of political reform, as you know. But he'll have to do whatever he wants to do, and the American people can make their judgment.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:20 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Teleconference Remarks to the United Mine Workers

September 26, 1995

Thank you. Thank you, President Trumka, for that great introduction; and thank all of you for that wonderful welcome you just gave me. I got to know your president, Rich Trumka, well in 1992, when we were campaigning together in Pennsylvania, and I learned that we have a lot in common. He's

a kid from a small town, born just after the end of World War II. He still likes fifties rock and roll. He's the first person in his family to go to college and to law school. And when he first ran for president, nobody but his mother thought he had a chance. But he kept plugging away in that modest, low-key way of his, and look where he is today. I'm also glad to be where he is today, and with him.

I also want to acknowledge another friend from 1992, who helped show me around West Virginia, your vice president, Cecil Roberts, and your great secretary-treasurer, Jerry Jones, of Illinois. I'm sorry I couldn't be with you in person, but I am there in spirit.

From your founding 105 years ago, the members of the United Mine Workers have always been the shock-troops of American labor. And I'm proud we're fighting today for the same things. If your brave founders could be with you today, they'd find another time of great change and great challenge for American workers. At the end of the 19th century, when your union got started, America was first entering the industrial age. Now we're the world's leading industrial power, and we're moving full-speed ahead into the global economy. Once again, we're challenged to make great decisions—decisions that will shape the lives of our children and our children's children.

The industrial age brought us great opportunities, to be sure, but it also brought us child labor, the sweatshops, the company towns and the company stores, and the working men and women in our factories who grew old before their time, with injured bodies and broken spirits. That's why we built strong unions in our country, and we built a caring Government to help Americans make the most of their own lives, and to protect them from abuses from which they could not protect themselves. The unions build the middle class, and the middle class built America on the American dream.

Now we find ourselves at another moment of great change. Even as we still depend upon the industrial might of coal miners and other workers, all of you know we're moving into an age characterized by information and technology and this new global economy that

links more of us together economically but also presents extraordinary new pressures on ordinary working people everywhere.

Our challenge is to recognize and embrace new ideas to preserve our vision for the future, a vision of high opportunity where the middle class is growing and the under class is shrinking, people have the opportunities to live up to their own God-given abilities, and families and communities have the ability to solve their own problems. We've got to hold on to that vision by holding on to the values which have always made this country great: freedom and responsibility; work and family; opportunity and the idea that we are, as my friend Governor Chiles of Florida said the other day, we are a community, not a crowd.

Now, a crowd is a collection of people who occupy the same space, just elbowing one another until the strongest and most powerful win, without regard of what happens to the others. A community is a group of people who occupy the same space, who believe that they're going up or down together, and that they have responsibilities to one another. The United Mine Workers has helped to keep America a community, and I thank you for that.

You know, that's what this budget debate is really all about in Washington, whether the America of the 21st century will be a community, as we want it to be, or a crowd, as so many in the Republican majority in Congress want it to be. We need to stop looking for ways to be divided and start looking for ways to reach common ground and higher ground. We've got to be forward-thinking enough to stand up for the future, even if it's not popular in the present. But we've got to be sensible enough to hold on to those core values which have made this country what it is.

The debate about the balanced budget is the biggest case in point. Let me be clear, I strongly favor balancing the budget, to lift the burden of debt off our children and to strengthen our economy. But I think we have to do it in a way that is consistent with those basic values. We've got to give people a chance to make the most of their own lives. We've got to strengthen our families; we've got to protect our children; we must honor our parents. We have to do things that will

grow the middle class and shrink the under class, not increase the insecurity of working families.

These are the values we ought to be making decisions on about the budget. In my judgment, the congressional budget that the Republican majority has offered violates those values. We, the American people, need to be a part of this. We need to ask them basic questions. When we look at their budget, do we really want to support a budget that will deny 300,000 elderly people the right to be in the nursing homes they have today? Do we really want to eliminate all those quality standards for nursing homes? Can't anybody remember what it was like to go in those places when there were no quality standards? Do we really want to tax 17 million working families, increasing taxes on them to the point that many of them will be put back into poverty, even though they're working, and take that money and give a tax break to upper income people who don't need it, and most of whom haven't asked for it?

Do we really want to say to a woman whose husband has to go to a nursing home that "in order for your husband to qualify for any Government assistance, you have to sell your car, your house; you have to spend all your life savings; you have to be totally impoverished"? Do we really want to make it harder for poor young children to get off to a good start in school? Do we want to make it harder for our schools to have smaller classes and computers, even in the poor areas? Do we want to make it more costly for young people to get college loans?

Do we want to make fewer and fewer scholarships available so that more and more young people won't go to college and won't get good jobs with growing incomes? And do we want to let corporations loot their pension funds and compromise the retirement of their workers' future? How can we forget—it was just a couple of years ago—when we had all these pension funds going broke? Just last December, I signed a bill that we passed through the last Congress to save the pensions of 8½ million American workers and stabilize the pensions of 40 million more. Now, do we want to go along with the congressional budget plan to let corporations go

and make that same mistake all over again and to loot their pension funds legally?

Now, this budget does all those things. Those are the choices. If you want their budget in 7 years, with their tax cut and their assumptions and their plan, those are the choices in that budget. But there is another way. I have offered Congress a plan that balances the budget without destroying education, without undermining our commitment to the environment, and without violating our commitments to working families, the elderly, and our children.

The budget debate forces us to answer a simple question: Do we want a Government that upholds our values as a community and stands on the side of working people, struggling to build better lives for themselves? I think the answer is yes. And that is exactly what I have been working to do.

Two and a half years ago, you sent me to Washington to generate jobs, increase income, shrink the under class, grow the middle class, give America a better, stronger future. Since I started my job, our economy has created more than 7 million new jobs, 2½ million new homeowners, 2 million new small businesses. Unemployment is down 20 percent. We're also cutting the deficit. You know, the deficit was \$290 billion when we started. It's down to \$160 billion now. That's a 40 percent cut; a cut for 3 years in a row, the best performance since Harry Truman was President.

But you know better than anyone that we have a lot more to do to make sure America keeps working for and not against working families. That's why I fought for the passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act. That's why we gave a tax cut to 14 million working families with incomes under \$28,000. That's why I support an increase in the minimum wage. That's why I proposed a new "GI bill for America's workers," to give people a check or a voucher when they're unemployed or underemployed, so they can take the money and take it to a local community college or any other training program for up to 2 years to get the kind of training they decide they need.

When people lose their jobs in this country today, too often the rest of our people walk away from them. And that's wrong. Our ad-

ministration is pro-family, pro-worker, and pro-union. Right after I took office, I got rid of my predecessor's antiworker, antiunion Executive orders that weakened unions from public service to private industry.

With an Executive order this spring, our administration said in no uncertain terms that we won't allow companies that do business with the Government to permanently replace striking workers. We want to make sure that if you're forced to exercise your right to strike, you won't be fired for it. Make no mistake about it, we believe collective bargaining is a right and firing striking workers is wrong.

I've often spoken about how America has to keep faith with the people who work hard and play by the rules. That means we must honor our obligations to those who risk their lives to go beneath the earth and mine our coal. Your workplace is unique. It can change in an instant from one of safety to one of danger. That's why we need to keep the Mine Safety and Health Administration and maintain it as a separate agency.

Under the outstanding leadership of Secretary Reich and Davitt McAteer, MSHA is enforcing the law, protecting workers, and saving lives. You know better than anyone that in the 25 years since Congress passed the Mine Safety Act, the deaths in the coal mines have decreased by 77 percent. Now there are those in Congress who want to destroy MSHA, to limit inspections in unsafe mines and leave miners out in the cold who dare to blow the whistle and stand up for safety.

Well, there are no coal mines in Washington, DC, and here, sometimes the voice of big money can shout down the voice of the people. That's why it is so important when United Mine Workers miners and Rich Trumka come to the Capital, as they did, to tell why saving MSHA is literally a matter of life and death. And that's why I will fight and fight against any bill to cut or gut MSHA.

Keeping faith with people who have worked hard all their lives also means protecting coal miner retirees' health care, as guaranteed in the Rockefeller Act, also known as the Coal Act. The Coal Act is our country's solemn covenant with more than 100,000 retired miners and their families to

protect their health benefits and their peace of mind. It is not a matter of partisanship. This act was signed into law by President Bush and is supported to this day by the major coal companies.

Yesterday, you heard the author of that act, Senator Jay Rockefeller, explain how it is threatened and how it must be maintained. Today, let me tell you, we're going to fight to preserve your health benefits as guaranteed in the Coal Act.

Let me close by saying that I understand what's at stake as we fight to protect the health and safety of coal miners. When I was a young lawyer in Arkansas, just out of law school, back in the early 1970's, I handled several black lung cases for retired coal miners who could breathe only with great difficulty after a lifetime in the mines.

Some of the folks from MSHA found a letter that was found on the body of a coal miner who died in a mine explosion in Tennessee. Although a barricade held out the bad air for over 7 hours, the trapped miners eventually succumbed to the suffocating gas. Here is what the miner, Jacob Vowell, wrote to his wife, Ellen:

"Ellen, darling, goodbye for us both. We're all praying for air to support us, but it's getting bad without any air.

"Ellen, I want you to live right and come to heaven. Raise the children as best you can. Oh, how I wish to be with you. It's 25 minutes after 2. There are a few of us alive yet. Oh, God, for one more breath. Ellen, remember me for as long as you live.

"Goodbye, darling."

That letter was written 93 years ago. Today, thanks to the United Mine Workers, a better America, and the grace of God, our miners are working in greater safety and living with greater dignity.

The future of our Nation depends upon rewarding the efforts of people like you with safety, prosperity, and dignity. You and your families and the millions and millions of working families like you, you are heart and soul of the American dream. We have to keep working together not just to preserve what's been won but to continue to fight for better jobs, better wages, and more justice.

The 21st century can be America's greatest time. Our children and our grandchildren

can enjoy more freedom, more opportunity if we do what is right. But we can't let the people in Washington who are trying to do it, turn back the clock. We have to keep America moving forward, strong, proud, and united, in the words of your own banner. Let's stay that way and march into the 21st century victorious for the values of ordinary Americans.

God bless you, and thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke by satellite at 2:15 p.m. from Room 459 in the Old Executive Office Building to the United Mine Workers convention in Miami, FL.

Remarks at the Swearing-In of Mark Gearan as Director of the Peace Corps

September 26, 1995

Well, Mark, congratulations to you and your family; to all the Members of Congress who are here and other former Peace Corps volunteers and others.

I have always been impressed by many things about the Peace Corps, one of which is the contributions made by Peace Corps volunteers after they come home. Senator Dodd was a member of the Peace Corps. Congressman Farr was a member of the Peace Corps. Donna Shalala served in the Peace Corps. The Vice President's beloved sister, Nancy Gore Hunger, was one of the first two people to join the Peace Corps, working with Sarge Shriver, all those years ago.

And it is a remarkable tradition that emphasizes that our country is about more than power and wealth. It is also about the power of our values and the power of a helping hand, and the ethic of service, and the understanding that we have an obligation not only to our own people but to people around the world to help them make the most of their own lives, and that the best guarantee of peace and freedom and democracy is the ability of people, freely, to develop their God-given capacities to strengthen their families and see their communities succeed. That's really what the Peace Corps is all about.